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LIFE AND LAST DAYS

OF

Robert Owen,

OF

NEW LANARK.

By George Jacob Holyoake.



THIRD EDITION.—PRICE FOURPENCE.

LONDON :

F. FARRAH, 282, STRAND, W.C.

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1866.



## P R E F A C E .

THE discourse on the death of Robert Owen, which concludes this brief 'Life,' was several times delivered in London and the provinces; the last time, and in its completest form, in the Public Hall, Rochdale, January, 1859. On this occasion Jacob Bright, J.P., presided.

'Mr. Jacob Bright was the first mayor of Rochdale, and is the brother of John Bright, M.P. In his opening remarks on taking the chair, he said, "Mr. Holyoake, it was known, was well qualified to speak upon Mr. Owen, and would no doubt treat the subject with ability." Mr. Bright did not say one word as to whether he agreed or disagreed with Mr. Holyoake or Mr. Owen. That point on which so many chairmen would have anxiously exonerated themselves, Mr. Bright said nothing whatever. With the usual courage of his family, he did what he choosed to do because he thought it right to do it, quite careless of consequences. He neither asked permission of the public nor apologised for taking it.'\*

'In acknowledging the tribute paid to the memory of the great philanthropist (by the presence of Mr. Bright in the chair), the lecturer said he "knew how to distinguish between courtesy and complicity, and did not infer coincidence of opinion on the part of the chair from that act." Mr. Bright, in speaking to the vote of thanks passed to him, expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which the subject had been treated. "He thought the meeting must be instructed, and be the better for discourses of the character of the one to which they had listened. The lecturer had remarked that 'we still live in an age when prejudice was stronger than justice.' That was true; but when he (Mr. Bright) heard any man generally spoken against by easy-going, well-to-do, and conventional people, he always thought there must be some good in him, and he had on this and other grounds a conviction (though differing in many respects from Mr. Owen) that he was a man of honest ability and benevolence, and deserved the esteem of his country, and this impression, the Discourse to which they had listened that night had confirmed.'†

Z. Mellor, Esq., Town Clerk of Rochdale, Mr. Alderman Livesy (though only recovering from a severe illness), Mr. Alderman Healey, Mr. Councillor Boothman, R. Mills, Esq., and the leading members of the Co-operative Store, were amongst the audience present on this night.

\* *Reasoner*, No. 660.

† *Morning Star*.

## PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF R. OWEN.

‘ Mr. Owen looks to nothing less than to renovate the world, to extirpate all evil, to banish all punishments, to create like views and like wants, and to guard against all conflicts and hostilities.’—DUKE BERNARD OF SAXE WEIMAR.—*Daily News*, November 19, 1858.

- 1771—Born, May 14, in Newtown, Montgomeryshire, North Wales.  
 1781—Arrives in London.  
 1783—Writes to Mr. Pitt against Sabbath desecration, from Mr. McGuffog’s, Stamford.  
 1786—Engages and resides with Mr. Satterfield, Manchester.  
 1789—Enters into partnership with Mr. Jones, of that city.  
 1790—Is engaged by Mr. Drinkwater, at £300 a year.  
 1791—Worked up the first bags of American cotton imported into England.  
 1792—Proposes Dr. Dalton as a Member of the Philosophical Society of Manchester. Discusses with Coleridge.  
 1794—Assists Robert Fulton, the inventor.  
 1797 First visits Lanark.  
 1799—Married Miss Dale, daughter of David Dale, of Glasgow.  
 1800-8—Aids Lancaster and Bell to commence instructing the poor.  
 1803—Presents a Report on the state of the Cotton Trade of Great Britain to the Glasgow Committee of Manufacturers.  
 1809—Commences Infant Schools at New Lanark.  
 1812—Was Chairman of the first Public Meeting held in Glasgow to consider a Ten Hours’ Bill.  
 1813—Completed the publication of his *Essays upon the Formation of Character*.  
 1814—Jeremy Bentham becomes his partner.  
 1815—Corresponds with Bishops of London, Durham, Peterborough, and St. David’s, who are interested in his proceedings. Is visited, at New Lanark and in London, by many of the following friends: Lord Stowell, Lord Stewart, Romilly, Baron Goldsmid, Duke of York, Joseph Hume, Lord Lascelles, Dr. Bowring, Prince Esterhazy, Henry Brougham, Vansittart, Canning, Cobbett, Wilberforce, Godwin, Carlile, Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay (father of Lord Macaulay), the first Sir Robert Peel, Malthus, James Mill, Southey, Ricardo, Sir James Mackintosh, Colonel Torrens, Francis Place, Edward Baines, etc. Becomes acquainted with Lords Liverpool and Sidmouth, Miss Edgeworth, Archbishop of Armagh, John Quincey Adams. Sends his *Essays on Formation of Character* to Napoleon Buonaparte, who desired to know the author. The Emperor and Empress of Russia stay a fortnight at New Lanark.  
 1816—Opening of the Institution in New Lanark for the formation of character.  
 1817—Denounced all the religions of the world in the City of London Tavern.\*  
 1818—Visits the Continent, the Duke of Orleans, Cuvier, La Place, A. Von Humboldt, Camille Jourdain, Duke de la Rochefoucault,

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\* In 1817 all the London mails were delayed twenty minutes by the load of newspapers to be carried, containing reports of Mr. Owen’s speeches. In three days he gave away 40,000 copies. On another day he ordered 30,000 of the *Times* and other papers, then costing 7d. and 8d. each.

- Sismondi, Prince Metternich, Pestalozzi, Fellenberg. Published 'New Views of Society.' Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury on the union of churches and schools.
- 1819—Lent to Lord Lansdowne and Lord Brougham a teacher whom he had trained (Mr. Buchanan) to establish the first Infant School in Westminster. Duke of Sussex, Bishops of London, Exeter, and Carlisle, Basil Montague, Dukes of Bedford and Portland, Archbishop of Canterbury, and others, appointed on committees to consider Mr. Owen's plan.
- 1820—Reports to the County of Lanark on the best means of relieving the distress of the poor.
- 1821-3—Holds public meetings in the Rotunda, Dublin.
- 1824.—Purchases Harmony Estates, Indiana, from the Rappites, consisting of a village and 30,000 acres.
- 1826—Returns to Scotland. Revisits America.
- 1827—Returns to New Lanark to arrange his retirement.
- 1828—Goes out to Mexico with sanction of British Government. Is offered California. Serves His Majesty as a sailor.
- 1829—Debates with Rev. A. Campbell in Cincinnati.
- 1832-3—Edits the 'Crisis' in conjunction with his son, Robert Dale Owen. Labour Exchange in Gray's Inn Road is established.
- 1836 to 1844—Publishes Book of the New Moral World.
- 1838-9—Queenwood Community commences.
- 1840—Is denounced by the Bishop of Exeter in the House of Lords. Publishes Manifesto in reply.
- 1841—Lectures on the Rational System of Society in the Egyptian Hall.
- 1844—Resides in America.
- 1847—Leaves America, and resides in England.
- 1849—Publishes 'Revolution in Mind and Practice.'
- 1850—Letters to Human Race.
- 1851—Commences 'Robert Owen's Journal.'
- 1853—Publishes 'Rational Quarterly Review,' which announces his 'spiritual' views.
- 1854—'New Existence of Man upon Earth.' 'Address to the Human Race on his eighty-fourth birth-day.'
- 1855—Holds the World's Convention, St. Martin's Hall.
- 1856—Issues the 'Millennial Gazette.'
- 1857—Publishes his Life in two volumes. Attends the Social Science Congress, Birmingham.
- 1858—Attends the Social Science Congress in Liverpool. Visits his birth-place, Newtown. Dies there, November 17.

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#### WORDS FOR ROBERT OWEN'S MONUMENT.

LOOKING down into the earth, into which poor Robert Owen's coffin was thrust, the words of the poet were never so applicable—

'They have made him a grave too cold and damp  
For a soul so warm and true.'

Of all who ever breathed the breath of life, Robert Owen was the man of largest heart, of head most wise, continually throughout the course of a long life, sedulously, zealously, thinkingly, with ever open purse in hand, generously, devotedly intent on devising how, best, and soonest, to mitigate the misery incidental to the destiny of man.

COL. H. CLINTON.

## PRINCIPAL WORKS OF R. OWEN.

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The principal works of Mr. Owen are inserted here for the convenience of any reader who may desire further information as to his principles.

Book of the New Moral World, in neat cloth boards	...	5	0
Development, or Principles of Home Colonization, quarto	...	1	6
Egyptian Hall Lectures, in reply to the Bishop of Exeter	...	1	6
Manifesto in reply to the Bishop	.. ..	0	6
Lectures on Marriages of the Priesthood	...	0	6
Address at the Opening of the Institution at New Lanark	..	0	2
Report to the County of Lanark	.. ... ..	0	2
Signs of the Times	.. ... ..	0	1
Address to Socialists	... ..	0	1
Lectures at the Mechanics' Institution	. . . . .	0	1
Owen and Brindley's Discussion	... ..	0	6
Address on Eighty-fourth Birthday, and Legacy (May, 1854.)	...	0	6
Inauguration of the Millennium. (May, 1855.)	.. ...	0	8
Address on Spiritual Manifestations. (July, 1855.)	.. ..	0	3
The Millennium in Practice. (August, 1855.)	... ...	0	4
Report of the Great Preliminary Meeting on the Coming Millennium, on the 1st of January, 1855.	.. ... ..	0	6
Tract on the Coming Millennium. (January, 1855.) Two Series. 1d. each series;	7 copies for	0	6
The New Existence of Man upon the Earth; Part 1, with an outline of Mr. Owen's early life, and his Addresses, etc., in 1815 and 1817. (March, 1854.)	... ..	2	6
Part 2. With Address on Opening the original Infant School (1816); Memorials to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818); and Essays on the Formation of Character. (1812-13.) (June 1854.)	... ..	2	6
Part 3. With Report to Lanark County. (1820.) (1854.)	.. ..	1	6
Part 4. With proceedings in Dublin. (1823.) (1854.)	... ..	2	6
Part 5. With Evidence respecting New Lanark. (1854.)	... ..	2	6
Part 6. With Record of Spiritual Manifestations. (1855.)	... ..	2	6
Part 7. With Outline of a New Government, etc. (1855.)	... ..	2	0
The Future of the Human Race; to be attained through the Agency of Spirits. (1854.)	... ..	1	0
National Review, etc. (1835.) 4 Parts and 1 Vol.	.. ..	1s. and 4 0	
Journal, Four Vols. (1850-2.)	... ..	each vol. 2 6	
The Revolution in Mind, etc. (1850.)	... ..	1	0
Letters to the Human Race. (1850.)	... ..	1	0
Life, Two Vols.	... ..	21	0
Millennial Gazette, 1856-8, 16 numbers, from 6d. to 5s. each.			

## LAST DAYS OF ROBERT OWEN.

'GONE BEFORE' were the words the Hon. Robert Dale Owen selected to place at the head of the funeral cards, in memory of his illustrious father. The manner of his going was in keeping with the simplicity, calmness, and beauty of his life.

Mr. Owen persisted at his advanced age, in feeble health, and in an inclement month, October, 1858, in going down to Liverpool. But a National Association for the advancement of Social Science stirred the pulses of the venerable propagandist. It was the child of his own genius and labours. At the end of his journey to Liverpool he had to take to his bed. On the day of the meeting—the last public meeting he was destined to appear at—he ordered Mr. Rigby to dress him. His feebleness was such that the operation took two hours. He was then placed in a sedan chair, and carried to the Hall. Four policemen bore him to the platform. It is now matter of public history, how kindly Lord Brougham, as soon as he saw his old friend, took him by the arm, led him forward, and obtained a hearing for him. Then Mr. Owen, in his grand manner, proclaimed his ancient message of science, competence, and good will to the world. When he came to the conclusion of his first period, Lord Brougham, out of regard to his failing strength, terminated it. He clapped his hands, applauded his words, then said, 'Capital, very good, can't be better, Mr. Owen! There, that will do.' Then in an under tone, 'Here, Rigby, convey the old gentleman to his bed.' He was carried back. As soon as he reached his bed he became unconscious. An hour after he revived.

'Rigby, Rigby,' he called.

'Yes, Sir—here I am.'

'How did I speak? What did I say?'

'O, very well, Sir. I have taken down your words.'

'Very good, read them to me. Ah, that will do. Very important, very important.'

Then he became unconscious again.

That scene on the Liverpool platform will not soon die out of recollection. Lord Brougham and Mr. Owen, the two marvellous men who stood there, were a sight not soon to be beheld again. Lord Brougham's vivacity at eighty was as wonderful as Mr. Owen's undying ardour at eighty-eight.

For two weeks he kept his bed at the Victoria Hotel. Mr. Rathbone frequently called to inquire after Mr. Owen's health. Mr. Brown, M.P., and many gentlemen, paid him a similar compliment. One morning he exclaimed, 'Rigby, pack up, we'll go.'

'Go where, Sir—to London?'

'Go to my native place. I will lay my bones whence I derived them.'

Dressing, delays, and carryings brought him to the Mersey. He was conveyed over. He took the rail to Shrewsbury. Thence a

carriage to travel thirty miles into Wales. When he came to the border line which separates England from Wales he knew it again. It was more than seventy years since he passed over it. He raised himself up in his carriage, and gave a cheer. He was on his own native land once more. It was the last cheer the old man ever gave. He wanted to persuade Mr. Rigby that he must be sensible of the difference of the atmosphere. With brightened eyes the aged wanderer looked around. The old mountains stood there in their ancient grandeur. The grand old trees, under whose shadow he passed in his youth, waved their branches in welcome. What scenes had the wanderer passed through since last he gazed upon them! Manufacturing days, crowning success, philanthropic experiments, public meetings at the London Tavern, Continental travel, interviews with kings, Mississippi valleys, Indiana forests, journeys, labours, agitations, honours, calumnies, hopes, and never ceasing toil; what a world, what an age had intervened since last he passed his native border.

When he reached a beautiful estate he had known in early days, he said, 'Rigby, we will drive up to the gates, and you ask if Dr. Johns is at home.' The astonished domestic answered, 'Why, Dr. Johns has been dead twenty years.' 'Once a man and twice a child,' was true of Mr. Owen. His early life had come over him like a flood. He was in the dreamland of his early days. 'Dead twenty years,' recalled him to the consciousness that death had gone before him and reaped the field of his youthful memories. Learning that the lady of the house was a daughter of Dr. Johns, he said, 'Rigby, go and say Robert Owen is at the gate.' She no sooner heard that unexpected name, than she came out to the carriage door, and with a woman's quickness saw how it was with the ancient friend of her father. She had him conveyed into her house and placed by the fire. 'Now, Mr. Owen,' she said, 'you are once more in your own country, among old habits and customs, what shall I get for you?' His answer showed how deeply his childhood days had come back to him. 'Make me some flummery†—wheat and milk; the diet of his father's table. He partook of it. He hardly ever ate afterwards.

His visit to Newtown was one of curiosity. He arranged to call Mr. Rigby Mr. Friday, and himself Mr. Oliver, and had themselves so reported at the Bear's Head Hotel. When he was able to go out, he had his carriage stopped two doors below, at the house of his birth, and sent in Mr. Rigby to buy two quires of the best note paper, and ask if that was the house in which Mr. Owen was born. It soon appeared that that fact was known and respected, and Mr. David Thomas, the occupant, showed Mr. Rigby the room in which Mr. Owen's birth occurred. Suspecting the truth, he asked Mr. Rigby if the old gentleman in the carriage could be Mr. Owen. Mr. Rigby, who had no orders to own it, and too little diplomatic skill to parry a question in which he was so much interested, neither answered no nor yes, but something between the two, and Mr. Thomas believed what he was not told. On Mr. Thomas delivering the note paper at the carriage window, Mr. Owen, without speaking, took his hand and

† Called *fermyty* in Devon, *flummery* in North Wales.



shook it warmly twice, and ordered his carriage to be driven back to Shrewsbury, and thence to Liverpool he went by railway. Unless for the pleasure of seeing the old country again by passing through it, and of re-appearing in Newtown as a visitor in his own proper name, one knows not the purpose of this journey. Mr. Owen had sent a letter to Mr. David Thomas, of Newtown, saying that provided a public meeting could be convened by the principal inhabitants, he should be happy to proclaim an important message to the people, be the guest of Mr. Thomas, and sleep once more in the house of his birth. The ruling passion was strong in death. When he reached Shrewsbury on his return, he went to the Lion Hotel, and took to his bed again. From thence, by request, he was carried to his carriage, and once more retraced his steps to Newtown. He dwelt by the way upon all the early scenes of his youth, and pointed out to Mr. Rigby various objects of interest to him. He entered Newtown now in his own way, and in his own name. Though he had promised Mr. Thomas to be his guest, he would not present himself at his house until he was recovered—it being contrary to his ideas of courtesy. He took up his residence at the Bear's Head Hotel, two doors from his birth-place. He slept in room No. 3; he died in room No. 14. He now desired Mr. Rigby to return to London, and send down Mr. Dale Owen, and he remained alone at the Bear's Head. Mr. Lewis, a bookseller in Newtown, rendered him attentions during several days, which Mr. Owen valued highly, and Mr. David Thomas was assiduous in kind offices to him. During a week he took only sugar and water. Dr. Slyman, of Newtown Hall, was his medical attendant. Mr. Owen, though never an abstainer from wine, was most temperate in his habits; and though most essential to him in his exhausted state, declined to take stimulants now. Dr. Slyman considers that he might have recovered if he had. Climatic disease, bronchitis being an accompaniment, is the explanation Dr. Slyman gave me of the immediate cause of his death. Two or three days before his death Mr. D. Thomas asked Mr. Owen (the Rector having called) whether he should invite him up, and whether he should read to him from the Bible and make some exhortation. Mr. Owen turned his head, and said in his commanding way, 'No, no.' Mr. Owen was much better qualified to exhort any Rector than any Rector to exhort him. Mr. Owen had no idea that he should die then. In a year or two—when he might die he no doubt intended to die in Newtown. But he never alluded to the possibility of dying. He always acted with such strength of will that he never calculated on any obstacle, and it never occurred to him that death might interfere with his plans. This was Mr. Dale Owen's impression of his father's feelings. He (Robert Owen) sent Mr. Rigby to the church of St. Mary's to ascertain the exact spot of his father's grave, but he regarded these facts as for future use. It was information he wanted. At three o'clock on the afternoon before his death, Mr. Owen was laying grand plans for the regeneration of Newtown, and when the Rector called upon him he occupied him with a discussion upon the details, and requested him to be good enough to see the magistrates and other

authorities to obtain their co-operation. The day before his decease, his eldest son (the Hon. Robert Dale Owen) arrived at Newtown, accompanied by a lady in whose house Mr. Owen had often been a guest, who rendered to him the last offices of friendship. He called at half-past one at midnight, and asked the time. He probably did not distinctly hear it, and supposed the reply to be half-past two. His eyes were dim then, but fearing his attendants might suffer from loss of rest, he avowed himself to be in no want of anything, and desired them to retire. Of course they were always at hand, and when an hour after he again asked the time, he was answered half-past two. At the end of a similar period he made a renewed inquiry as to the time, and on being told it was half-past three, his sense of hearing being low, he evidently understood the reply to be half-past two, and he said in his usual smiling way, 'Why it has been half-past two these three hours.' He thought some friendly imposition was being practised upon him, and he showed his perfect possession of his mind by quietly rebuking it. It was after this, about seven in the morning, as his son held his hand, and a friend stood near him, that he placidly passed away. Death, which commonly beautifies the features, re-imprinted his perennial smile upon his face. His lips appeared as though parting to speak, and he slept the sleep of death like one whose life had been a victory.

Mr. Owen does not appear to have recurred in his last illness to the 'spirits,' with whom he had, according to his own report, for four or five years maintained a friendly and familiar intercourse.

The following letter, which appeared in the daily papers, will best tell the story of his last moments. It is from his son, the Hon. R. D. Owen:—

'Newtown, Montgomeryshire, Nov. 17, 1858.

'MY DEAR SIR,—It is all over. My dear father passed away this morning, at a quarter before seven, and passed away as gently and quietly as if he had been falling asleep. There was not the least struggle, not a contraction of a limb, or a muscle, not an expression of pain on his face. His breathing gradually became slower and slower, until at last it ceased so imperceptibly, that, even as I held his hand, I could scarcely tell the moment when he no longer breathed. His last words, distinctly pronounced about twenty minutes before his death, were "Relief has come." About half-an-hour before, he said, "Very easy and comfortable."

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Fog and frost prevailed everywhere as we set out from London, on Saturday night, November 19th, to attend the funeral at Newtown. Mr. Rigby, the faithful secretary of Mr. Owen, and Mr. Truelove, on the part of the John Street friends, and Mr. Law, were of the party. From twelve to two we were detained at Stafford waiting. By three we were at Shrewsbury. We went down to the Lion Hotel, to visit the pathway through which our dear old master was last carried. By four o'clock we were on the mail coach, out for a four hours' ride, through Welchpool to Newtown. It was a pleasure to get once more beyond the confines of civilisation, where there were no railroads, and to drive along with smoking horses and blowing bugle, to chat to the

guard and treat the coachman, to plunge through the fog, get nipped by the frost—to have insolvent horses mistake a tree for a sheriff's officer, shy into the hedge, and half toss us over—then to draw up under a lamp post and nearly be knocked down, and be knocked up again by a huge mail bag, which the guard threw at you as the best way of getting it on to the coach—then rattling on again, making turnpike keepers start up wildly in their first sleep, run about the road in their shirts to throw open the gates—then dropping small bags of letters on little boys' heads—throwing them over garden walls, and disturbing the whole country as we passed along. The friend who sat by me had a vague notion that he should go head first off, to prevent which he held by the strap that bound the luggage. The guard, to save me from a similar fate, suggested that the said strap should be twisted round me. Disposed to agree to anything, I acquiesced, and in a short time nearly had my head pulled off—for every vibration of the coach, and every clutch of my friend nearly strangled me. When we arrived at an Inn, my friends got out of their cloaks, and I out of my strap, and we plunged about wildly stamping like macadamisers, brushing the frost from our heads, and recovering circulation in noses and toes, lighting cigars against field gates, and imbibing, like true teetotallers, hot ginger beer; but one is bound to confess that the greatest abstainer of the party lost his pledge in the fog, and by the time we got to Welchpool he ordered the first 'brandy hot,' which it is also true that he never got, for his companions had drank up all the scanty glasses the landlady had left out for the morning coach.

When we reached the Welch border, over which our lost friend had passed, we took off our hats. We were entering what was to us the kingdom of the dead. The whole land seemed sacred where he lay. Wales, as far as one could see in the night, possesses a foliage more graceful than England. English trees wear an irregular, spasmodic outline, as though they had met with opposition in growing, and were savage at it; while the Welch trees were round or slim, tall or diffusive, with more proportion and grace, as though they were there of their own accord; and were glad of it. This may be fancy, but fancy to a traveller is sister of fact, and often delights him more. At last, houses came in sight—old gables projected—hills overshadowed—the Severn was running by—now we are amid low streets—now over a bridge—now we turn a corner by the cross—there, that plain, pleasant-looking house—a stationer's shop at the very end of the chief street, Bridge Street—there, that is where Mr. Owen was born! Ah, here, two doors to the left is the Bear's Head Hotel, where he lies. A pleasant hostlery. We drove up to the Elephant and Castle, but returned and 'put up' at the Bear's Head. Our cards being sent up to the Hon. Robert Dale Owen, we were welcomed by him. He resembles his father greatly. Lesser in stature, but hair, air, gentleness of tone, refinement, and kindness of manner are the same.

On Sunday evening the late Mr. Owen was removed into the house of his birth. Mr. Thomas had had a canopy of drapery hung under which to place the coffin, which was covered with plain black cloth, bearing a plain brass engraved plate, with the words—

‘Robert Owen, of New Lanark.

Born, May 14, 1771,

Died, November 17, 1858.’

In accordance with the presumed wish of Mr. Owen, everything was done unostentatiously, and as inexpensively as possible. He desired to set an example of simple and costless taste in all things. Mr. Thomas, who kindly and efficiently superintended the public arrangements, adopted the principle of associating the aged as far as possible in the funeral, connecting Mr. Owen with the earliest associations in Newtown. The oldest inhabitants, equal to the task, bore the bier. Three of his schoolfellows or playmates were discovered to be living; one, Mr. William Williams, the father of the post mistress of Newtown, died a day or two after Mr. Owen. Two old gentlemen, with tottering steps, walked in the procession, dim of sight, and hard of hearing. It was very touching to see them guided along in a ceremony which must soon attend themselves. The chief shops of the town put up shutters out of respect to their eminent townsman, who had come to die among them. But for my brother's marriage taking place at Fleet Street on Saturday, we should have done the same there. On Monday, however, the day of the burial, I ordered the house closed. On the day of the burial, Mr. Robert Cooper arrived, though the day before it had fallen to him to attend the same sad offices for his own mother. Colonel Clinton had arrived from Royston, Mr. W. H. Ashurst from London, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Pears from London, and Mr. Thomas Allsop from the Den, Teignmouth. Mr. W. Cox and Mr. Pare were already there. When the procession left the Cross all business was suspended, the streets were crowded, windows, housetops, road-side elevations, contained curious watchers—old people especially peered with reverential gaze upon the bier. Odd looking windows in gable-looking houses, in high ways and narrow streets, that seemed not to have been open for ages, were thrown wide now, and young girls and children crowded to see the memorable sight. The medical and clerical professions, gentlemen and manufacturers of the town, joined in the procession. It first went to St. David's, the new church, where the Rev. Mr. Edwards, M.A., officiated, Mr. A. A. Evans played the Dead March in Saul, very effectively, as the procession left the church, and we proceeded to St. Mary's, an old Saxon church, now in ruins, standing in a romantic spot. It is said to be a structure of the ninth century. The tower has been standing nearly a thousand years. The old bells peal as clearly now as when Harold was king. How one would like to be able to converse with the early ringers! The body of the church is now in ruins. The windows are gone, the roof is dropping in, the gallery is dipping. A noble willow, planted from the slip brought from the famous one over Napoleon's tomb at St. Helena, grows under the shadow of the tower. Near to that spot we laid Mr. Owen in his parents' grave. The enclosure of the churchyard had fallen into decay, and an inhabitant of Newtown, who returned from Australia with a little wealth, gave £50 to build new walls.

But the walls want suitable gates, and Mr. Dale Owen has presented a new pair of iron ones. The Severn runs by the side of the churchyard, and near to Mr. Owen's Grave are two small grave stones, one in the form of a heart, bearing the initials R. O. (Richard Owen); another stone near it is in the form of a diamond, bearing the initials J. L. (Jane Lewis.) Richard Owen was a distant relative of our Mr. Owen. Richard and Jane Lewis were lovers, whose parents forbade their union, and they went to the opposite side of the Severn, and on the bank, in sight of their graves, poisoned themselves. The inhabitants erected a bower over their graves, connecting both. And here the poor mother of Richard Owen used to come and sit and knit all the day through, and often, as the sextoness told us, her father, who was sexton in her youth, had at twelve o'clock at night to induce the old lady to return to her home. She sleeps now by the side of her child. This bower of so many sad and moving memories had fallen into decay. Mr. Dale Owen, with that graceful feeling by which his father was distinguished, has ordered this bower to be restored.

There in the old churchyard, under the ancient tower, where the glorious Severn ripples, we buried Mr. Owen. All was solemn, and touching, and graceful, except the ceremony. Never did the church service, that stereotyped, and, in parts, painful ritual, sound more harshly than over the pure old man. Mr. Allsop, who would have walked from Devonshire, had it been necessary, to be present at the grave, would not enter the church. He preferred the solitude of nature, where the reverence of the heart was undisturbed by hollow formularies. On arriving in the town he addressed to me the letter I shall here quote:—

‘Newtown, Montgomeryshire, Nov. 22, 1858.

‘MY DEAR FRIEND.—The grave has closed on Robert Owen (if great aims and a blameless life constitute greatness and goodness)—a great and pre-eminently good man—and what a worker! For seventy years, since the year 1788, when my informant saw him rolling up a piece of silk very neatly, and with his mind ever absorbed upon the great problem of humanity, he has never passed one hour in idleness, one hour not devoted to the deliverance of his fellow-man from the degradation of superstition, and the tyranny of class and capital.

‘It pained me deeply that such a man, after life had departed, should pass into, or rather under, the mummery of an outworn creed, which it had been the great labour of his life to expose and destroy. What hope can we rationally entertain of the future, when the followers of Robert Owen endure Christian burial for their master, whose chief merit was his exposure of the system of priestcraft and superstition? Why, the very Indians throughout Central America and Mexico, have recently rejected their mystery men, having detected them in their frauds, whilst our mystery men are accepted “by a most thinking people,” to use Cobbett's expression, as of divine appointment, and their existing revelation as the perfection of reason. It is not by this weak conformity to the absurd practices enjoined by *our* superstition, that any progress is to be hoped for.

‘It was not thus that George Fox obtained for the Quakers full recognition of their independence, it was not by such means that Cromwell, Ludlow, and Ireton succeeded. Oh, for one hour of that true man, fanatic though he was, and his Ironsides, to show the men of this age of what stuff

the men were made who withstood tyranny and priestcraft in the olden time. In this time of cant and profession, where every man is liberal—God save the mark! in profession; where are the men who bear witness to the truths which are known—"familiar as Household Words?" Where are the men who, despising the opinion of others, or what is said to be opinion, who bear witness to their conviction? What men, out of the myriads who laugh at the superstitions rampant throughout the world, show their sense and appreciation of truth by refusing to serve or invoke a Deity, of whose existence they have no evidence? For if a Being, such as he is described, did exist, he should be superseded. Where the men that refuse any longer to perpetuate that horrid system of punishing men for crimes which that system has rendered inevitable, and from which they *cannot* escape?

'After Savonarola, Giordano Bruno, who follows to bear testimony to the truth as it is in him? Alas for an age and a people who seem determined that custom shall be fruitful and reason barren. Who can hope for a purer inner life, or any *real* devotion?—Ever yours,

T. ALLSOP.

Let us hope that men of the true mould yet live. We believe they do. Is not the writer of this letter one? But there was a difficulty in the case. As Mr. Owen appeared to wish to lie in the grave of his ancestors, the wish was sacred, and was to be complied with—and as they lay in consecrated ground, the church had dominion there. The Rector declined to allow friends to speak at the grave. The ceremony of the church could, as in the case of Richard Carlile, be forced upon the dead. To have protested against it, as Mr. Carlile's eldest son did, would have produced a scene. This would be undesirable, Mr. Owen's life had been peace and good will. Better ten Popes officiated at his grave, than disturb his funeral by a broil. Had I had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Robert Dale Owen intimately (I never met him until my arrival in Newtown), I would have suggested that, since a clergyman was inevitable, that we ask the Archbishop of Dublin, whose noble friendship for Blanco White makes his memory reverential—or Maurice, or Kingsley, some priest whose large sympathy with mankind places him on a level with Mr. Owen, or whose genius would sanctify his service—from such lips I could have bowed without pain before the offices of the church. The Rev. Mr. Edwards, who did officiate, I met at the public breakfast, I walked from the church in conversation with him, I spent some time with him at Mr. Thomas's house in the evening, and frankly own that his conduct was very graceful throughout. He kept, with the good taste of an educated gentleman, from making any one conscious of his professional position, and we all owe him esteem for his bearing. Yet it is justice to ourselves to own our sentiments, and to vindicate them.

The churchyard was crowded. Even the windows of the ruined church were thronged. In one window Mr. Allsop observed an elfish old woman, holding up two elfin children, black-eyed, wild, and picturesque. The whole scene, daguerretyped, would have been striking. Next to the old men, who stood around, the prettiest feature was the procession of young children whom Mr. Owen, living, delighted to have around him. The little band stood there at the

grave of the old man who brought so many blessings upon childhood.

For once, I confess, bigotry would have been a blessing. How I prayed that the clergy would do by Mr. Owen as they did by Voltaire and Paine, refuse him the rites of Christian burial. Then we would have performed the last offices of humanity in our own way. Had they refused him a grave, we would have borne the old man away, and have laid him among his own people. Multitudes would have awaited the arrival of his remains at Euston Station, and we would have buried him in the presence of his disciples in London.

Reporting over, and a hasty dinner, I proceeded to the grave to relieve Mr. Rigby, who, for reasons we had, remained in the churchyard when all had left. The solitude of the old man's grave, as I groped my way to it in the dense fog, brought back, in a flood, all the bright recollections of his busy life—so closed. Later, Mr. Pare and Mr. Allsop joined me. By the fitful light the workmen had there, I gathered some of the ashes of Mr. Owen's ancestors, and preserved them for an urn to be kept at Fleet Street. Early next morning, I, Mr. Pare, and Mr. Allsop were the first pilgrims to the grave. One relic of the dead, which the frost-hardened earth did not enable one to entomb, was gathered to be preserved with the ashes, lest some sacrilegious foot should trample upon it. In the dim light of the breaking day we took farewell of that spot to which many a traveller in time to come will turn.

Newtown Hall, the residence of Dr. Slyman, Mr. Owen's last physician, is a delightful mansion, situated in a kind of park. It was formerly the residence of Sir John Powell Price. In the old time Charles the First had shelter there. In Mr. Owen's youth it was a school, and there he received his education. Mr. Owen's birth-place is a good and agreeable house; very old. Its polished oaken floors are as firm now as ever. The room in which he was born is one of the pleasantest cosiest little rooms imaginable—just the room in which one would like to be born, if one could be consulted before-hand in the matter. The deed conveying the house to Richard Owen, Robert Owen's father, bears a transfer by the well-known 'Abraham Newland,' on the part of the Bank of England—and I discovered one party to the deed bore the name of Lloyd Jones, no relative, of course, of him whose name Mr. Owen's friends know.

In dense fog and biting frost we again took our places on the coach top for Shrewsbury. Mr. Allsop sat on the front box, Mr. Pare and I behind him. That was a glorious journey, not soon to be forgotten. Mr. Pare, one of Mr. Owen's literary executors, always various and eloquent on the theme of his great master's character, and Mr. Allsop, recalled golden memories of the old time and the old heroes. Never, too, had winter so many wonders in my eyes. A thick silvery rime covered all visible nature. The very hedges shone as though embossed with all the richness of Italian art. Trees and shrubs and sprays hung in every variety of beauty. The deep fog shut out all beyond the road-side trees, which came in sight one by one, with a new mystery of loveliness. The dense haze seemed like some spirit of the

woods, holding up her beautiful children to our gaze. Each tree stood out in its bright and sparkling glory, like a bride—our whole ride was through an endless procession of them. When Shrewsbury Castle came at length in sight, I was sorry for the first time in my life to come in sight of a castle. We had left the dreamland of poetry and death behind us. The busy world and its recurring struggles were now before us—and we entered it with sad hearts.

### ORATION ON THE DEATH OF MR. OWEN.†

*Delivered in the Public Hall, Rochdale.—Jacob Bright, J.P.,  
in the Chair.*

WHEN military and spiritual heroes die, their deeds and deserts are emblazoned in the popular memory. Parliamentary grants, biographies, and mausoleums render them substantial tributes. When the soldier dies in a just cause, or the saint departs who has displayed human virtues, men begrudge them neither honour nor renown. We here, however, record the history of one who was neither soldier nor saint—who yet fought like a warrior in a holy cause, and who did more for humanity than any general or any saint during the two generations in which he lived. Has the world a spare hour to devote to the memory of one whose profession was humanity, and whose daily study was the social welfare of the common people?

It is a reproach brought against the working class, that they are ungrateful to those who have served them; that they receive benefits without troubling themselves to ask to whom they owe them; that their prejudices do not prevent them taking what they can get, but that their prejudices prevent them acknowledging their benefactors; that they suffer them to die from among them, and render them no honour and no thanks. We meet to-night to remove that stigma as far as we are concerned.

A great publicist has died—Robert Owen. Death, the warder of the unknown world, has admitted through his mysterious portals no greater friend of the people, than Robert Owen. For a period extending back to the end of the last century, Mr. Owen was a standard-bearer of advanced opinions. Children owe him thanks, for he founded infant schools; Dutch paupers owe him thanks, for he drew up the plan which secured them independence; workmen owe him thanks, for he set the example of shorter hours of labour; Prussia owes him thanks, for he was the author of their national system of education; Trades Unionists owe him thanks, for he headed their vast and perilous deputation to Lord Melbourne, on behalf of the Dorchester labourers; Politicians who believe in progress

† There is an oratorical pretension about the word oration which I could not fulfil, and do not like; but to dissect a friend in a 'Lecture' or a 'Discourse,' immediately on his decease, seems a cold-blooded proceeding. 'Oration' implies more of passion and feeling—on this account, therefore, I retain it.



without war,\* owe him thanks, for he insisted upon international arbitration before Peace Societies were ventured upon; Co-operators owe him thanks, for he it was who taught them how to economise the expenditure of their earnings; Teachers owe him thanks, for he first developed the plan of normal schools; the People owe him thanks, for he first suggested those schemes of social recreation, and those attentions to their physical condition, which are now the recognised duty of the highest classes to promote. There has been no public man in this century so true a publicist as Mr. Owen. He took a wise and wide interest in the welfare of the people, beyond any other leader of opinion. He had no contemporary, and he leaves no successor. The poor man, read in the history of his own order, may say of the death of Mr. Owen, with much more truth than Sir Walter Scott said of Pitt, or Gladstone of Peel—

‘Now is the stately column broke;  
The beacon light is quenched in smoke;  
The trumpet’s silvery voice is still;  
The warder’s silent on the hill.’

There was a certain newness about Mr. Owen which is singular. He was born at Newtown, he first became distinguished at New Lanark, he then established ‘New Harmony,’ in Indiana, afterwards the ‘New Moral World,’ he was the author of ‘New Views,’ he proposed a ‘New State of Society,’ and one of his latest publications was the ‘New Existence of Man upon Earth,’ and he had, as we all know, a freshness and newness of spirit which often shamed young men, and surprised the old.

Though I had the privilege of knowing Mr. Owen twenty years, and of having my attention professionally drawn to his views, I do not assume myself to be capable of giving an adequate estimate of his character or services. I pretend to express only my own conception of them. There are few men living who know the whole compass of his career—who have read all his speeches—all his writings—all his remarkable correspondence; who have perused the newspaper comments upon his proceedings, during the last fifty years of his public agitations. I know few who have done so, and without doing this no one can fully appreciate the nature or extent of the influence he has exercised. Not only England, but America, London, and the capitals and courts of every nation in Europe, have, at one time or other, resounded with his name. Emperors have been his guests, kings his listeners, princes his friends, statesmen his correspondents, philosophers his partners. The foremost men of the past age turned to him for inspiration; rulers waited upon his words, and the peoples of two worlds once believed in him as a deliverer. A man must have native force of character who achieves this. It is not a well-meaning man of mere feeble philanthropy, but a man of ability, of feeling, and of truth, to whom we pay the tribute of our respect to-night.

To Mr. Owen’s memory I offer homage, but it is the homage of

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\* I believe that to the good offices of Mr Owen, we owe exemption from a second American war, both nations having accepted his mediation.—Dr. J. Watts, ‘Manchester Examiner,’ Nov. 23, 1858.

discrimination. That is the manliest reverence which praises within the limits of truth. I hate the flatterer. Either he is a knave who intends to impose upon me, or a patron who intends to befool me, or a coward who applauds because he has not the courage to condemn, or a weak-eyed man who can only see one thing at a time. I hate the men who, by wholesale praise, hide from me what I should be, and keep me what I am. I prefer the man who blows hot and cold to him who blows all hot, because I want to be invigorated, not to be stifled. This sentiment will rule all I say. I stand here to honour him of whom I speak, by frankness as well as praise, and not to pour hollow compliments into the 'dull cold ear of death.'

Robert Owen, like Thomas Paine, was endowed with great natural capacity for understanding public affairs. He was accustomed to give practical and notable opinions upon public questions, quite apart from his own doctrines; and his society was sought as that of a man who had the key of many State difficulties. Those know little of him who suppose that he owed his distinction wholly to his riches. A man must be wise as well as wealthy, to achieve the illustrious friendships which marked his career. He had personally an air of natural nobility about him. He had, as the *Daily News* says, 'an instinct to rule and command.' I only knew him late in life, when age had impressed measure upon his steps and deliberateness on his speech. When he had the vivacity of youth and middle age, he must have been an actor on the political stage of no mean mark. He always spoke as 'one having authority.' He had a voice of great compass, thorough self-possession, and becoming action. Like many other men, he spoke much better than he wrote. Only two or three years ago, at a private dinner, arranged that Mr. Joseph Barker might be introduced to him, there were several University men, and authors of some note, present. Mr. Owen's conversation was the most brilliant of all the company. On the last occasion on which he presided in public was when he made the presentation of a purse to his faithful attendant Mr. Rigby. The patrician manner in which he spoke of his old friend, the dignity without haughtiness, the kindness without condescension, I never saw equalled. It was a relic of the old manner, which I have seen alledged in romance, as the characteristic of the princely employer, but which I never witnessed before. The meeting was like a reception by Talleyrand.

Mr. Owen's speeches had vivacity and humour. His writings have little of either. His best book, and the one that made his reputation, his 'Essays on the Formation of Character,' Francis Place revised for him. Mr. Owen ought always to have put his manuscripts into the hands of others. He had noble thoughts, but when he took his pen in hand he fell into principle spinning, which is always duller reading than the Fifth Book of Euclid. It is very true and very important, but it bores you. However, his Life of himself—his last work and most interesting of all—contains more personal facts of interest and importance than any political biography which has appeared in our time.

The impression Mr. Owen made upon workmen of the last genera-

tion is best described by one whose name is an honour to that order—I mean Ebenezer Elliott. In an address sent by Trades Unionists of Sheffield in 1834, Elliott says—‘ You came among us as a rich man among the poor, and did not call us a rabble. This is a phenomenon new to us. There was no sneer on your lips, no covert scorn in your tone.’

These words show us how working men were treated some thirty years ago. It was in reply to this address that Mr. Owen made a remark which is an axiom in the best political liberalism of these days; he said ‘ *Injustice is a great mistake.*’\* It is not merely wrong, wicked, malevolent, hateful; it won’t answer, it won’t pay. It is a blunder, it is a disgrace as well as a crime.

Mr. Owen was an apostle, not a rhetorician. He never looked all round his statements (as Mr. Bright now does) to see where the enemy could come up and pervert them. He said ‘ man was the creature of circumstances’ for thirty years, before he added the important words ‘ *acting previous to and after his birth.*’ He had the fatal ideas of the New Testament, that equality was to be attained by granting to a community ‘ all things in common’—at the commencement. Whereas this is the result, not the beginning. You must begin with inequality and authority, steering steadily towards self-government and the accumulation of the common gains, until independence is secured to all. Mr. Owen looked upon men through the spectacles of his own good nature. He never took Lord Brougham’s advice ‘ to pick his men.’ He never acted on the maxim that the working class are as jealous of each other as the upper classes are of them. All that he did as a manufacturer he omitted to do as a Founder of Communities. As a manufacturer, even Allen, his eminent Quaker partner, wrote to him, ‘ Robert Owen, thou makest a bargain in a masterly manner!’ Dr. Bowring allowed that the only time Jeremy Bentham ever made money, was when he was a partner of Mr. Owen. In after life Mr. Owen was really reckless of his own fame. No leader ever took so little care in guarding his own reputation. He lent his name to schemes which were not his. The failure of Queenwood was not ascribable to him. When his advice was not followed, he would say ‘ Well, gentlemen, I tell you what you ought to do. You differ from me. We will not quarrel. Carry out your own plans. Experience will show you who is right?’ Then failure came, for which he was not responsible, but it was ascribed to him. The public knew nothing of Executives which he withdrew from. They only knew Robert Owen, and whatever failed under his name, they inferred failed *through him*. Mr. Owen was a general who never provided himself with a rear guard. While he was fighting in the front ranks, priests might come up and cut off his commissariat. His own troops fell into pits against which he had warned them. Yet he would write his next dispatch without it occurring to him to mention his own defeat, and he would return to his camp without missing his army.

Mr. Owen’s fault was that he was always playing at world making

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\* January 15, 1834.

—no, I retract that word. I will not say ‘playing’—he was too earnest a man for that—but he was always dreaming of world making. Now, to sweep the world clean and begin again is a rather extensive undertaking. It would be a great interruption to business. And it is difficult to pack up the human race and put them out of the way, while the world is being cleared. So the world objected to the operation, and Mr. Owen never had his way. But let us not be too hasty to condemn Mr. Owen for this idea. He was a young man and had commenced as a theorist when the first French Revolution broke out. He saw France and America both make the attempt of reconstituting society. Things were so bad, politically and religiously, that nobody had any hope and little chance of amending them. Many men besides Mr. Owen thought it better to begin again. When Pope, the poet, who suffered from great constitutional debility, stumbled, and nearly fell as he was getting into a boat, he exclaimed, by way of apology to the waterman—‘God mend me!’ ‘I think, sir,’ answered the waterman, ‘God had better make a new one!’ This was the opinion of most political Reformers when Mr. Owen was young. Their only hope was in a new state of society. Even the present Queen’s father said, when introducing Mr. Owen to a public meeting in the Freemason’s Hall, London, so late as 1819—‘It may be doubted whether the permanent safety of the British Empire does not depend upon the measures which may be speedily adopted to ameliorate the condition of the working classes,’ and these measures he called upon Mr. Owen to explain.

It is difficult to judge yet the great act of Mr. Owen in ‘denouncing all the religions of the world,’ as he did in the City of London Tavern in 1817. It was part of his plan. It was a deliberate act. He told his religious partner, Mr. Allen, the Quaker, that he would do so two years before. This act arrested the acceptance of his social system. From being a Social Reformer, Mr Owen commenced to be a Religious Reformer, and, being a thorough man, he did by the Church as he did by the State—he proposed to reform it altogether. For this work, Mr. Owen appears to me to have made no adequate preparation. He followed the instinct of his conscience without calculation. The ominous meeting in the Rotunda of Dublin in 1823, sealed the fate of his Social Reform, and condemned his schemes ever after to the hands of the minority. The great powers of society set their faces against him, and the people were too poor to carry his ideas out. The greatest person of distinction who best understood Mr. Owen, and who did not desert him on account of his irreligious views, was the Queen’s father, to whom we have before referred. He said at one of Mr Owen’s meetings, two years after he had denounced all religions, ‘If I understand Mr. Owen’s principles, they lead him not to interfere to the injury of any sect; but he claims for himself that which he is so desirous to obtain for his fellow creatures—“religious liberty and freedom of conscience”—and this he contends for, because his experience compels him to conclude that these principles are now necessary to secure the well-being and good order of society.’ This is excellently put, and is really all Mr. Owen meant. Being always a Theist, he was logically

in error in denouncing 'all religions.' His province, as it appears to me, was to defend humanity against the abuses of religion, and maintain, as the Duke of Kent puts it, 'religious liberty and freedom of conscience.' However, Mr. Owen thought differently, and nobly he acted up to his convictions. Like Paine, he threw away worldly honour and renown for the sake of conscience. His courage was of the highest order. He quailed before no tumult—no disappointment made him despair. He was ready to lead an army, and he was equally ready to lead a forlorn hope. And when he had retired from the world, and was stretched upon his solitary bed in Newtown, and all his toils and visions were over, and the sands of life were ebbing fast, and a few short hours would close his long account with the unheeding world, the clergyman who called upon him asked him 'whether he did not regret the waste of his life upon fruitless efforts and unaccepted schemes?' The old philosopher's eye brightened, and he answered:—'No, sir; my life has not been spent uselessly. I have proclaimed important truths to the world, and if they were not regarded by the world, it was because the world did not understand them. Why should I blame the world? I am in advance of my time.' The clergyman admitted that he never saw more consistent philosophy than was manifested by the brave old man.

Let us also remember here that there was one noble priest of the Church of England who understood this aspect of Mr. Owen's character and defended it. 'No disposition,' said the Rev. Sidney Smith (Canon of St. Paul's), 'has been more powerfully, or more successfully satirised, than the sanguine temperament of some men, which prevents them from learning a lesson of caution or prudence; men who are never daunted by disappointment, nor delayed by defeat; who trust implicitly in a fortune which has so often deceived them; and believe in the continuation of a success which has met with so many interruptions; but, bad as this is, it is infinitely better than the opposite extreme. The man who cannot be taught to despair is better than the man who cannot be taught to hope, is better than the man whom no success can ever inspire with confidence, whom no blessing can ever teach to enjoy, who is dark in the blaze of noon; dead in the fulness and freshness of life.'

It was Mr. Owen's idea that the existing system would fall to pieces of its own weight, and he astonished people by naming the time when this would happen. He was wrong about the time, but right about the fact. Is not the system always falling to pieces? What is the meaning of our panics, pauperism, and 'great social evil'? Did not Ireland fall to pieces when three millions of people perished of famine? Has not our Indian Empire fallen to pieces in a very tragic manner within these twelve months? The system in some part or other is daily tottering and falling, and has to be repaired and renewed. Mr. Owen did not believe in the renewal of society. In this he was wrong. His own views enabled this repair to be made. They were more practical views than even Mr. Owen thought. His own dream of a science of society which he entertained in 1817 is adopted in 1858 at Liverpool. The nobility who deserted him in 1823 now take up his

ideas—they deny his name and work by methods of their own—but they work with his materials and in his field.

There are three principal misapprehensions current upon Mr. Owen's views—by the political economists who regarded him as interrupting the course of society—by the clergy who held that he taught false views of the formation of character—by newspaper writers who considered that he sought to bring about an impractical state of Communism. The best correction of these errors is to state what his views were on these points.

1. The old terror of political economists was that Mr. Owen wished to interfere with the means by which twenty millions of mouths were fed. He did not propose to interfere with the means, but to improve the means. At present the twenty millions are not engaged, and never were engaged, in any concerted action to fill their mouths, but are scrambling for each other's loaves, lying in wait to intercept each other's fortune, and not unfrequently cutting each other's throats by the way. Mr. Owen thought this system might be improved—the world has now come round to the same opinion.

2. What Mr. Owen maintained as to the formation of character was that the circumstances in which men were placed exercised an influence upon the mind for good or for evil. Nobody doubts this now. Mr. Buckle, in his brilliant book on the 'History of Civilisation,' has established this truth beyond dispute. Mr. Owen said, if you want better men, place them in better circumstances, raise the wages of the poor—diminish their labour—better their food—improve their dwellings—increase their knowledge—let science serve them—let art refine them—give them wholesome recreation, and secure them moderate competence. This was not orthodox gospel, but it is a gospel very much wanted in the world.

3. When a great painter once executed a picture of the deluge, all the world went to see it: and they found on the canvass nothing delineated but a boundless waste of water, and one solitary spar projecting above it, upon which a single snake had crawled. What could tell the tale of desolation so well? All the agony and hopelessness of a doomed and drowned world were pictured there. So now, if any man would picture the hollowness of our present civilisation, he has only to pourtray a vast crowd of men with a solitary gallows standing above them, on which some poor wretch—perhaps a woman—is hanging. There you behold at once the falsehood of our civilisation—the poverty of social science—the incompetence of government—the feebleness of education—the weakness of the Church. We first rear the criminal and then strangle him. We ought to speak with moderation of the triumphs of Christianity so long as the Gallows is the conspicuous companion of the Cross. Mr. Owen never ceased to say we ought to manage these things better, and the world called him 'a man of one idea.' He was thought to be a man of one idea because he had but one way of stating it. You might as well call Newton a man of one idea because he merely discovered the law of gravitation—that was one idea, but it was capable of boundless and sublime applications. In the same manner Mr. Owen's idea of the influence of physical

circumstances is applicable to every detail of human condition. Mr. Owen's great Communistic idea was, that the ordinary conditions of subsistence, and dwelling, and clothing, ought to be guaranteed in common to all: that moderate labour, on the part of the many, and moderate attainments in the science of society on the part of the few, would enable this to be done. He saw that there would always be a savage element in society so long as the lower classes were left to scramble like barbarians for the supply of their physical wants. So long as labour is presided over by want and death, civilisation will alternate between splendour and tragedy. And history shows this to be true. It was urged that to have food, shelter, garments, and knowledge in common, would ruin everything, enervate everybody. This is said still, although we have old things and are having new things in common, without these results. Communism simply means that state of society in which the common fruits of intellect, art, and industry shall be so diffused, that poverty shall be impossible and crime unnecessary. And we are every day attaining to this. The laws of the universe are common. Light, and sky, and air are common. Life and death are common. In the hour of his birth the young prince screams for air like any pauper; and unceremonious Death who has the *entrée* of the poor-house, walks into the parlour of the gentleman without sending in his card. The noble building is now open to the gaze of the shoe black as well as to the connoisseur. Works of highest art and books of rarest value are now being made accessible to all. Fire offices insure the cottage or the mansion. The careless are as secure as the careful. Life insurance is another form of equality. The strong and temperate are made to use their prolonged lives to pay up premiums which go to the progeny of the weak and the reckless. The virtuous and the vicious, the base and the noble, are all declared equal in the sight of the law. The same police watch over the life of the scoundrel and the patriot. Before civilisation began, the weak had to take care of themselves, and had to get strength or discipline. Now the feeble and the stout, the coward and the brave, are equally protected. In savage times a man had to take care how he got into a quarrel. In all danger, whether he sought it, or whether it was thrust upon him, he had to defend himself. It was the reign of animal competition. The law has done away with this competition. The apparent effect of this is to encourage the coward and the sneak. That personal daring which made the inspiration of Homeric song, which made Sparta a name of energy through all time—which still makes the blood tingle in the pages of Sir Walter Scott, is no longer a daily requisite or means of renown. A man need not either carry arms or use them. He neither requires personal bravery nor discipline. A set of men are paid to defend him. He has only to call the police. An old warrior of the romantic days would rather die than utter the craven cry. If a man gets into a disputation he is not allowed to settle it in honest hot blood, but must refer his quarrel to the decision of a cold-blooded magistrate, who will probably give the decision against him, and compliment his enemy. How the hot blood boiled—how courage blushed

with shame—how the pride of manliness was stung, when craven, cringing Peace, in the name of law, first put valour down! But we all know now that the peace-maker was right. There is plenty of exercise for courage without our expending it in broils and bloodshed. The equality of the law has produced justice—and the equality of competence will lead to happiness, security, and morality. Society will not be disorganised, though Co-operators and Communists should succeed in finding that condition of human society, in which it shall be impossible for a man to be deprived or poor.

These were Mr. Owen's convictions. He never explained the process, nor did he foresee all the steps by which this change would come about, but let us not deny to him the honour of that inspiration to which modern English society owes its highest improvements. Mr. Owen, dead but a few days ago, lives fresh in our thoughts. How will he live in the memory of posterity? Longfellow bids us so live that,

‘Dying we may leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.’

Lord Macaulay has estimated how few of all the children of literature are quoted in the third generation. Of the thousands of books which are printed, how few will survive in the memory of posterity! Of the myriads of men now passing through time—how few will leave traces of their presence! The many build their temples, they erect their mansions, they set up their landmarks, but the great sea of events rises, and the deluge washes every vestige away. Mr. Owen may be one of the memorable and solitary exceptions, because his influence will live in the progress of humanity. He may have been a visionary, an enthusiast, or a dreamer; but the dreamer dreamed grand and enduring dreams. We see his footprints on the plains of society as deeply impressed as Robinson Crusoe saw footprints on the desert island on which he was thrown. Lord John Russell the other day at Liverpool, in one of the happiest compliments paid in modern times, said in reference to Lord Brougham, that in the great war between the Prince of Condé and Marshal Turenne, it once happened that the Prince of Condé was called from the field to a distant part of the country. It occurred one night during his absence, that Turenne observed his outposts blazing. From one to another, the conflagration spread, and he soon found himself in a circle of fire. ‘I thought,’ said he to his officers, ‘you told me Condé was far away.’ ‘So he is,’ was the reply. ‘So he may have been,’ Turenne answered, ‘but depend upon it he has returned. I see the hand of Condé in this.’ So, said Lord John Russell, in that happier warfare now conducted against social evils—whenever you discover any marked improvement going forward in society, you may not be told that Lord Brougham has done it—but you know by this sign that he has been here. And something of this kind may be said of Lord Brougham's friend, Mr. Owen. Priests may efface his name, calumny may blot his reputation, cowardice may refuse to quote his services, ingratitude may forget them—but time will sweep away the dust of bigotry, the historian will come and remove the incrustations of prejudice, and underneath posterity will see—the tracings of our master's hand.



But it was not so much for Mr. Owen's genius as for his disinterestedness that I love him. He was a Materialist without sensualism, he was a Sceptic who yet had positive principles. He taught that benevolence ought not to be a cheap sentiment of pity. He taught pity to leave off weeping and ally itself to improvement. He hated that grand patriotism which talked platitudes of well meaning, and did no work. He kept no terms with that religion which recited creeds and collects, and rendered humanity no service. He had the faculties of a man, but the soul of a woman. He sought to conquer not by force but by attraction; but he had that tenderness of woman, which passes from the ball room to tend with patient hand and uncomplaining devotion the bedside of the sick. No affluence corrupted Mr. Owen. He was familiar with courts, and could himself command the luxuries of life; but while the song rose high and the revel was long, he turned aside, like Howard, to listen to the wail in the prison, and the shriek in the cottage.

While we sit here at this moment, while you listen and I speak, tears trickle in many a dungeon in Europe—many a proud heart is breaking—despair that will soon be insanity, chafes against prison walls this night. I speak not of suffering which crime begot and restrained brutality endures, but of that agony of patriotism which men feel who have tasted the noble draught of freedom, and who have fallen and failed in extending it to their countrymen. In this hour how many in our own land are there whose utmost toil will never bring them competence, who by no privation can ever escape the fear of want—who will see their children grow up inadequately educated, and in thousands of cases without education at all—parents who see no happy future for their children, and children who will see their parents toil while they can stand, and die at last without sunshine on their doors or peace in their hearts. There are myriads who exclaim in the impassioned words of Louis Blanc, 'The Saviour has come, when comes salvation?' All this we should never suffer ourselves to forget. Among this audience the mind's eye may see other faces than those which occupy seats. As I look around I can see other eyes than yours—in the sounds that break from you, one may hear others which you do not make. Be not sad, be not despairing, but deem it a guilty thing to partake of a joy in which you forget those who are excluded from it by no fault of their own. And why we honour Mr Owen is, that he sympathised with all unhappy destiny—he never forgot it, and laboured unceasingly to change it. For seventy years he was the servant of the poor. For their deliverance he abandoned ease, wealth, and worldly honour. All around him greed thirsted for gold, he saw thousands were added to thousands, acre to acre; he saw men give themselves up to the pride of family, of title, of position; he himself despised all allurements, and plotted for the welfare of mechanics, labourers, weavers, and miners. It was not the praise of the poor which he sought, for he constantly rebuked them. It was their welfare which he studied. He had no satisfaction in the splendour of courts so long as the hovel stood in sight. He could enjoy no pleasure while there existed the sorrows of the poor.

I may repeat here what I said in the Cowper Street debate, in 1853, when Mr. Owen was calumniated by a Minister at my side.\* Robert Owen spent his long and honourable life in the service of the people. He travelled from clime to clime, from court to court, and from town to town, on his noble mission of benevolence. There have been none so high but he invoked their aid: there have been none so low but he has stooped to bless them. Where the priest has given us barren prayers, and the politician promises, Mr. Owen dispensed his gold with a princely hand. He joined in all schemes of philanthropy without reference to sect or party. His purse was open to courts which neglected him, to nobles who dissented from him, and to the Church which cursed him. But undeterred by toil, undaunted by danger, unchilled by calumny, even in his old age, when other men grow cold and conservative, his heart beat with the generous hope of youth, and he moved among us with that radiant smile which never waned, and that kindly voice which never varied: unshaking and unshaken, he knew neither selfishness nor apathy.

A few days ago, when I listened in the Town Hall of my native town, Birmingham, to the magnificent orations of Mr. Bright (if the chairman will permit me to make the allusion in his presence), when I heard him allude to the unrewarded heroism of that poverty which in this country oscillates between independence and pauperism, when I heard him say in his imposing way—‘I do not care for military greatness or renown: I care for the condition of the people among whom I live \* \* Crown, coronet, mitres, military displays, pomp of war, wide colonies, and a huge empire, are in my view all trifles light as air, unless with them you can have a fair share of comfort, contentment, and happiness among the great body of the people. Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, and stately mansions do not make a nation.’ And then he added a sentence the like of which we have not heard in Europe since the days of Mirabeau, ‘The nation in every country dwells in the cottage.’ And in the smile of the cottager he alone read the glory of the Government. In this noble passage I heard a man of genius uttering that sentiment which Mr. Owen in another way and on other principles, gave his life to enforce.

Out of the master’s grave will there arise a new and invigorated party? Now death passes the responsibility from the master to the disciple. The mantle of Elijah will always fall if shoulders can be found worthy to wear it. But I shall say here I do not see all the characteristics one ought to see in his surviving disciples. The long years of apathy and inactivity which have succeeded the seizure of Queenwood, ought now to be atoned for by wise exertions to vindicate the memory, and what Mr. Owen would much more value, extend the knowledge of his views. Weak humanity and forcible feebleness will never save society—it requires thought, earnestness, unity, and action to do that.†

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\* The Rev. Brewin Grant.

† Col. Henry Clinton earnestly and wisely calls Social Reformers to united action, that great social services may fitly attest Mr. Owen’s worth and influence.

We now turn to the closing scene of all. The circumstance of Mr. Owen's death, and his own apparent wish to lie with his fathers, rendered his burial within the precincts of the Church inevitable. And I readily honour the toleration of the Church, which gracefully conceded him her sepulture. But I should have honoured her yet more had she waived her right to read her ceremony over his remains, and have permitted the last offices of affection to be performed by his friends. He who in his manhood had said 'Theology was a disease;' he who in his mature years declared that 'mankind had had no rest in the past, would know no rest in the future, under the dominion of the priesthood;' he who during seventy years protested against the ceremonies of an obsolete superstition; HE should have been spared in death the repetition of words which were the earnest aversion of his life. No gentleman obtrudes upon another words he declines to hear, and the first instinct of honour leads him to shrink, with jealous sensitiveness, from treating the dead, who can no longer complain, with less respect than he would show when living. Why should the Church, which aspires to the highest regard, be less scrupulous in her code of conduct? As we laid Mr. Owen down by the old Church of St. Mary, Newtown, which had stood there the professed witness of truth since William the Conqueror landed, as I listened to the rippling of the honest Old Severn, which descends from Plinlimmon's Mount, and felt the sharp true frost in the air, and heard the old bells toll which had summoned thirty generations of men to the tomb, where, it is said, no falsehood is suffered—it grated harshly upon the ear to hear the truth violated in that hour. As my eye met that of mourners around, men who had stood at the grave of Lamb and Coleridge, of Cobbett and O'Connell, and who at home and in distant lands had braved every human danger to set mankind free, and who had grown grey in unchanging reverence for Mr. Owen, because he had been the first in courage to demand, and the loudest and longest in his cry for 'Truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man'—I felt in that hour that nature was real, grief was real, the only hollow and false thing was the Service of the Church. I did think that the Church would have shown dignity by her silence, and that the poorest genuine word from the heart of a friend, would have been a far holier ceremony in that hour. What need was there for priestly ceremony? No priest can consecrate the ground where we lay those who die for humanity. All earth is made sacred where their bones repose. The frank blessing of a wise and pure man, though I might not deem it religiously efficacious, I could esteem, if it came from a generous heart though expressed in the language of a creed. The form is secondary if the spirit be true. But if the blessing on me implied a curse on my brother, who differed from me in faith—if my admission to the sanctuary of sympathy was accompanied (as it is in the Church Service) by the exclusion of other members of the human family who err—if they err at all, not in intent, but from misdirection, or want of higher light—from that narrow and unwholesome blessing, I would turn away. The bleakest, dreariest, obscurest spot in this big world, would be holy ground to me compared with the daintiest sepulchre bigotry

had so consecrated. The wild winds—storm and tempest such as fell on Lear's head, would be more consoling to me than those accents of salvation which concealed in them the wail of my brother, my friend, or my neighbour. And much more true is this of Mr. Owen, whose whole life was made up of the double passion of charity and humanity.

However, all is over now, and we inherit alone the example of his life. He exiled himself from the splendid acquaintances of his youth, and made himself an outcast and a martyr, that the truth might be spoken, and the poor might be saved. Let us love the outcast, the exile, and the martyr wherever they may be found. There is light in their footsteps. The incendiary fires the world accuses them of igniting, are the beacon fires through which those who come after them will be saved. Their fate, as I once heard it grandly said, is not to be mourned over, but to be imitated. When Mr. Owen entered upon public life he found men were the vassals of the crown, the prey of the priests, the property of the tax-gatherer. They bled for the king—they bowed before the clergy—they toiled for the pension list. The crown took their bodies—the mitre their souls—the state their means. They lived in ignorance—they laboured without reward—and what is worse, they put themselves like dry sticks under the cauldron of corruption. Mr. Owen taught industry its power, and property its duty; and was the first to show the working class how to struggle for their own improvement without anger or impatience. It was he who taught them that golden lesson of peace, that the true way to effect Reform is to change erroneous systems and not to hate men.

Well might his end be peace. As I stood in the room where he passed away, I thought how many golden memories had crowded round his dying bed. How the devotion of his life—his labours of love—the friendless whom he had saved—the poor whom he had served—the words of kindness he had spoken—the deeds of mercy he had done, must have been the bright visions of his midnight hours. It recalled to my mind one of Leigh Hunt's fine contributions to the Religion of Humanity, in which he tells the story of a certain Oriental Owen, one Abou Ben Adhem—

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)  
 Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,  
 And saw, within the moonlight in his room,  
 Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,  
 An angel writing in a book of gold:—  
 Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,  
 And to the presence in the room he said,  
 'What writest thou?' The vision rais'd its head,  
 And with a look made of all sweet accord,  
 Answered, 'The names of those who loved the Lord.'  
 'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'  
 Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
 But cheerly still; and said, 'I pray thee, then,  
 'Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'

The angel wrote and vanish'd. The next night  
 It came again with a great wakening light,  
 And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd.  
 And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.